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Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

List of issues and questions in relation to the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Armenia

Addendum

Replies of Armenia*

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Constitutional, legislative and institutional framework

1. Key pillar of legal reforms in Armenia is the set of amendments to the Constitution adopted on 6 December 2015 through referendum, which reaffirmed constitutional guarantees for protection of women's rights. The Constitution, in particular, stipulates the principle of legal equality between women and men, as well as stipulates that one of the main objectives of State policy in the economic, social, and cultural spheres is promotion of actual equality between women and men.

2. Regarded as key issues and requiring adoption of new fundamental approaches at the level of constitutional solutions, reforms in the electoral system and the concept of referendum were also discussed within the framework of the constitutional reforms effected in the Republic of Armenia. In this respect, the new Electoral Code, currently under consideration by the National Assembly, provides clearer mechanisms for protection of women's rights in the political sphere which will contribute to their more active participation in the political life of the country.

3. At the same time, adoption of a comprehensive law "On domestic violence" is envisaged (for more details, see point 7).

4. It should be mentioned that each action concerning protection of women's rights is carried out with the participation of NGOs and civil society. This also refers to the reports, prepared by the Republic of Armenia and submitted to the United Nations treaty bodies, the drafts of which — pursuant to the established practice — are always discussed with representatives of NGOs and members of the civil society. Particularly, the combined fifth and sixth report of the Republic of Armenia was submitted for open consideration on 18 October 2013 with the participation of members of the interagency commission preparing the report, representatives of NGOs and international organizations.

5. Besides, the draft report was considered on 21 December 2012 and 22 November 2013 during the sittings of the Women's Council under the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia (to note, the aforementioned Council also includes many NGOs and members of the civil society, see also www.gov.am).

6. The main tools for achieving gender equality in the Republic of Armenia are the Law "On ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men" adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia on 20 May 2013 and the Gender Policy Concept Paper approved by the Government of the Republic of Armenia on 11 February 2010. On the basis of the Concept Paper, the Gender Policy Strategic Programme for 2011-2015 has been implemented during the previous years, which is currently being summarized, and based on its results a new strategy is envisaged to be elaborated in the nearest future.

7. With the aim of assessing the gender situation in the country and the implemented strategic programmes, a number of measures were taken in 2015:

(a) Upon the assignment of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia analysed the results of the Republic of Armenia Gender Policy Strategic Programme for 2011-2015 and the 2011-2015 National Programme against Gender-Based Violence and presented a vision on primary policy targets and related necessary measures for the coming years;

(b) In 2015, National Institute of Labour and Social Research of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia carried out "Study of the situation with regard to ensuring equal opportunities and equal accessibility to economic resources for women and men in the labour market" with the funds of the State Budget of the Republic of Armenia. Its results will allow developing recommendations on structural reforms of the social and economic sphere, aimed at addressing the problems encountered in the process of enhancing women's competitiveness and reducing professional discrimination;

(c) On the initiative of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia and supported by the UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF, study of the current situation of gender equality in the Republic of Armenia was carried out and a report was prepared which summarized the results of assessment of the Republic of Armenia Gender Policy Strategic Programme for 2011-2015 and the 2011-2015 National Programme against Gender-Based Violence.

8. With a view to creating tools for situation assessment, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia developed a manual on "Methodology for situational assessment of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men" and provided it to the Marzpetarans of the Republic of Armenia; the manual is envisaged for local self-government bodies of the Republic of Armenia and is aimed at contributing to the carrying out of an accurate situational assessment of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men in the Marzes of the Republic of Armenia.

9. Currently, activities aimed at introduction of the above-mentioned documents are under way.

Access to justice and legal complaint mechanisms

10. There is a separate position of an Adviser on Women's Issues within the Staff of the Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Armenia. Taking into consideration the fact that since the second half of 2015, the Adviser has been on leave granted for taking care of a child, the powers thereof are currently performed by the Head of the Department of Legal Analysis of the Staff of the Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Armenia.

11. The Adviser on Women's Issues assists the Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Armenia in executing the powers reserved thereto by law. It should be noted that according to Article 2 of the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On Human Rights Defender", the Human Right Defender is an independent and irreplaceable official, who performs protection of human rights and freedoms violated by state and local self-government bodies and officials, guided by the fundamental principles of lawfulness, social coexistence and social justice.

12. The Adviser on Women's Issues co-operates with all the structural subdivisions of the Staff of the Human Rights Defender taking into consideration the peculiarity of each complaint and alarm. Thus, in a number of cases the Defender — jointly with representatives of national prevention mechanisms — has examined violations of women's right in places of imprisonment, such as penitentiary, psychiatric, care and other institutions. The official in charge of women's rights permanently co-operates with the Department of Protection of Human Rights on Individual Applications and the Rapid Response Department.

13. Individual complaints on discrimination against women's rights are accepted on general grounds and are mainly endorsed to the Department of Protection of Human Rights on Individual Applications. Upon receiving the complaint, the Human Rights Defender makes a decision (1) on accepting the complaint for consideration; (2) on presenting to the applicant the opportunities for protection of his or her rights and freedoms; (3) with the consent of the person having submitting the complaint, on transferring the complaint to other state bodies, local self-government body or other official thereof that is competent to decide the complaint on the merits; (4) on not considering the complaint (Article 11 of the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On Human Rights Defender").

14. Examination of the issues raised in the complaint shall be carried out as prescribed by law, during which the Defender is competent to have an unfettered access to any state establishment or organization, demand from any state or local self-government body or officials thereof and receive necessary materials and documents relating to the complaint, receive from state or local self-government bodies or officials thereof and state servants, except for courts and judges, clarifications on issues emerging during examination of the complaint, etc. (Article 12 of the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On Human Rights Defender").

15. Then, on the basis of the results of the consideration of the complaint, the Defender is obliged to make one of the decisions prescribed by law (Article 15 of the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On Human Rights Defender").

16. During examination of complaints and cases on women's rights violations, practical implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and application of the standards prescribed thereby are especially emphasized. Requirements of the Convention and obligations assumed thereunder by the states are used while protecting women's rights under an individual case, as well as underlie the decisions made by the Defender. The Convention standards also underlie the development of a separate section entitled "Women's rights" and analyses of problems with regard to women's rights in other sections of the annual reports of the Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Armenia.

17. In general, the Staff of the Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Armenia receives alarms on violations of women's rights via hot line, as well as by directly calling the Adviser on Women's Issues and submitting a written application and complaint.

18. In 2015, more than 30 reports were received on women's issues, vast majority of which were anonymous. On the basis of the reports, the women were provided with advice. The Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Armenia and the staff thereof are financed out of state budget funds. Thus, the budget of the Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Armenia made up AMD 249,561,800 in 2015, and AMD 255,984,200 in 2016.

National machinery for the advancement of women

19. With a view to achieving the implementation of the principles stipulated in Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and Millennium Development Goals on ensuring availability of functional and efficient mechanisms to achieve gender equality in the

state administration system, the Council on Women's Issues under the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, established in 2000, has been replaced by the Council on Ensuring Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the Republic of Armenia. The Council rules of procedure stipulates that "the Council on Ensuring Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the Republic of Armenia has been established by the Decision of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia No 1152-A of 19 November 2014, as a national mechanism to co-ordinate the process of ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men in all spheres".

20. The Council is headed by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and is composed of officials competent to make decisions (ministers, deputy ministers, deputies of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, a judge of the Court of Cassation of the Republic of Armenia, Head of a Department of the Staff of the President of the Republic of Armenia). The Secretary of the Council is the Head of the Social Affairs Department of the Staff of the Government of the Republic of Armenia. With a view to organizing the current activities of the Council, a working group, chaired by the Head of the Social Affairs Department of the Staff of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, has been established. For the purpose of examining separate issues in the sphere of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men and/or other urgent problems, the Council may form ad-hoc groups upon the proposal and with the participation of specialists not deemed to be members of the Council, representatives of business community, international organizations and NGOs.

21. The invited representatives of the international organizations and NGOS, business community, diplomatic representations and consular offices of foreign states accredited in Armenia, who at least five days before the sitting of the Council may submit a recommendation to the Secretary of the Council on putting an issue on the agenda, may participate in the Council sittings in an advisory capacity. When performing its activities, the Council is accountable and responsible to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia. With a view to carrying out the Council's activities in a complete manner, the Social Affairs Department of the Republic of Armenia has been provided with two additional positions.

22. The following key issues, among others, were discussed during the sittings of the Council and the Working Group held in 2014-2016:

(a) Results of the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women and documents adopted thereby;

(b) Results of the "Best Woman Entrepreneur" Award Ceremony;

(c) Submission of recommendations made in the Report of "Armenian Young Lawyers Association" NGO to the bodies of legislative, executive and judicial powers of the Republic of Armenia on determining the quotas of women's participation in local self-government bodies under the new draft Law on Local Self-Government Bodies;

(d) Development of the "2017-2021 Strategic Programme for Ensuring Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the Republic of Armenia", etc.

Temporary special measures

23. Taking account of the current political situation, i.e. adoption of the new Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, activation of social-political processes in connection with elections of local self-government bodies in 2016 and of the National Assembly in 2017, optimization and political changes in bodies of the executive power, amendments initiated by the Government of the Republic of Armenia in the legal framework with regard to public service, in order to enhance women's political participation, the following objectives have been set:

(a) Issue of ensuring at least 30 per cent representation of women in elective bodies;

(b) Making relevant amendments to the Electoral Code of the Republic of Armenia in two directions:

(i) Instead of including women in the first group of 5 of the lists, representation of at least one woman candidate in the first to fourth and each next 4 seats;

(ii) Improvement of rotation mechanism (in case a female deputy recuses herself or assumes another position, the latter should again be replaced by a woman);

(c) During the upcoming elections (National Assembly, local self-government bodies), support to female candidates through implementation of relevant programmes (educational, grants, etc.) at all the levels.

24. Issues relating to the political participation of women, particularly the issue of determining a relevant quota in the new Electoral Code of the Republic of Armenia have — with the participation of representatives of the working groups chaired by the Head of the Social Affairs Department of the Staff of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, as well as representatives of NGOs and international organizations dealing with ensuring and exercising equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men — been discussed during the round table organized in the OSCE Office in Yerevan, and the recommendations put forward during the round table have been submitted by the Head of the Working Group to the Minister-Chief of Staff of the Government of the Republic of Armenia.

As a result

25. Pursuant to part 4 of Article 83 of the draft Electoral Code of the Republic of Armenia placed on the agenda of the ninth session of the fifth convocation of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, in the first part of the national electoral list of a political party, alliance of political parties and each of the political parties included in the alliance, the number of representatives of each sex, starting from the 1st place on the list, must not exceed 70 per cent in each integer group of 3 (1-3, 1-6, 1-9 and subsequently up to the end of the list).

26. All the State programmes within the framework of the new model of the employment policy, stipulated by the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On employment" entered into force on 1 January 2014, including the unemployment benefit, have been re-defined. As a result, new active programmes for State regulation have been introduced. Particularly, the programme for payment of unemployment benefit has been modified by such new regulation instruments which

must mostly serve the active engagement of the unemployed persons in the labour market. Under the new model of the employment policy, active programmes for State regulation of employment are implemented, each of which is aimed to ensure employment of certain target groups in the labour market.

27. As of 31 December 2015, the following programmes for State regulation of employment have been implemented:

(a) "Partial compensation of salary to the employer in case they employ uncompetitive persons in the labour market and provision of financial assistance to a person with disabilities for a person accompanying him or her". 516 uncompetitive persons have been involved in the programme, of which 202 are women;

(b) "Organizing professional training for the unemployed and persons at risk of losing their jobs: job seekers" programme is aimed at assisting the participant in finding appropriate a job. 977 persons (including 85 persons with disabilities) have been involved in the programme, of which 753 are women;

(c) "Providing assistance to the unemployed in finding a job elsewhere" programme is aimed at filling vacancies which continuously remain open and ensuring stable employment in the marzes (regions) of the Republic of Armenia (except for the city of Yerevan), particularly, rural settlements and border regions through regulating the internal labour mobility. Under the programme, 48 persons have been seconded to other settlements, of which 15 are women;

(d) "Providing assistance to the unemployed in acquiring professional work experience in their professional field" programme is aimed at ensuring stable employment for an unemployed person. 352 young unemployed have been involved in the programme, of which 288 are women;

(e) "Providing lump-sum compensation to employers in case they employ persons uncompetitive in the labour market". 500 uncompetitive persons have been involved in the programme, of which 365 are women. 29 persons with disabilities have been involved in the programme;

(f) "Providing assistance to persons uncompetitive in the labour market for them to engage in small entrepreneurial activities, as well as in cattle-breeding". 70 uncompetitive persons have been involved in the programme, of which 34 are women;

(g) "Providing assistance to farming through fostering seasonal employment", 4,793 programmes have been implemented, 6,285 persons have been involved in the programmes, of which 2,331 are women;

(h) "Providing financial aid to persons uncompetitive in the labour market for visiting employers", 1,925 persons (of which 1,384 are women) have been involved in the programme, 2,282 visits have been paid;

(i) "Organization of job fairs", 402 employers and nearly 12,390 job seekers participated in the job fairs, the employers introduced 1,575 current and 705 upcoming vacancies. As a result of the programme, 685 job seekers were employed;

(j) "Ensuring temporary employment for the unemployed through organization of paid public works".

28. 7,225 vacancies, of which 346 are newly created, were registered by local offices during January-December 2015. The number of employers having submitted vacancies amounts to 3,215. As of 31 December 2015, the number of vacancies available in local offices amounts to 1,770.

29. 11,107 persons, of which 5,543 are women, were actually involved in the State employment programmes in 2015.

30. Throughout the year, 16,598 job seekers became employed with the help of local offices, of which 6,285 were provided with a seasonal job, 398 — with a temporary job, 8,976 of those placed in jobs are women, of which 2,330 have been provided with seasonal jobs. The number of persons became employed with the help of local offices has increased by 9.8 per cent and that of employed women — by 4 per cent, as compared with the same period of the previous year.

Stereotypes

31. A number of goals and objectives aimed at overcoming gender stereotypes and discriminatory practices, particularly, through education on gender issues and raising public awareness, including ensuring coverage of gender issues, professional orientation among learners, etc. have been embraced in and implemented within the scope of Gender Policy Strategic Programme for 2011-2015. New Strategic Programme for 2017-2021, dedicated to gender equality issues, is also expected to address the given issue.

32. With regard to elimination of stereotypical attitudes towards women and girls who experienced multiple forms of discrimination, these and similar issues have been included in European Union Human Rights Budget Support Programme 2016-2018 for Armenia, which is at the stage of implementation.

33. "KIN" [Woman] International Film Festival is held in Armenia, during which films by 52, 69, 82, 72 woman film-makers from more than 16, 25, 27, 21 countries have been screened during 2012-2015, respectively.

Violence against women

34. On the initiative of NGOs and with the participation of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, the draft Law "On domestic violence" has been elaborated and submitted to the Government in 2012. However, taking into account the fact that the judicial and legal reforms have been under way in the country, it has been decided that there is hardly any need to adopt separate laws, but it is necessary in the first place to make certain changes to the legislative framework; hence the Government of the Republic of Armenia instructed the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Armenia and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia to ensure the inclusion of manifestations of domestic violence, as well as the effective mechanisms for responding thereto and prevention thereof". They were also instructed to discuss with NGOs and include new possible measures in the current social assistance and protection programmes.

35. For the execution of the instruction of the Government of the Republic of Armenia — for the purpose of preventing domestic violence and providing assistance to persons subjected to domestic violence, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia elaborated the relevant provisions on

social assistance to be provided to persons subjected to domestic violence. On 17 December 2014, the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia adopted the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On social assistance", which defines the concept of "domestic violence" and relevant provisions on social assistance to be provided to persons subjected to domestic violence. A number of documents ensuring implementation of the Law were adopted in 2015. They are as follows:

(a) Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia "On establishing the list of persons included in socially disadvantaged and special groups entitled to a living space, procedure and conditions for providing housing, declaring decisions of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 614-N of 13 April 2006 and No 894-N of 1 August 2013 as invalid, and making an amendment and supplement to Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 304-N of 17 February 2011, and making an amendment to Decision No 1516-N of 25 December 2014" No 1069-N of 10 September 2015, which regulates relations pertaining to providing accommodation (as a temporary shelter) to persons subjected to domestic violence, as well as those pertaining to solving social issues thereof;

(b) Order of the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia "On approving criteria for preliminary identification of persons subjected to domestic violence" No 144-A/1 was approved on 20 October 2015;

(c) Order of the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia "On approving guidelines for referral of persons subjected to domestic violence" No 177-A/1 was approved on 10 December 2015.

36. The last two documents are aimed at promoting the process of identification, referral and provision of social services to persons subjected to domestic violence, as well as providing bodies conducting identification of persons subjected to domestic violence with relevant instruments and methodology.

37. Under the Programme approved by Decision of the Civil Service Council of the Republic of Armenia No 567-A of 8 July 2008, every year, more than 150 civil servants holding highest, chief, leading, junior positions have undergone training courses on "Gender Violence", organized by the National Institute of Labour and Social Research of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia.

38. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, with the support of the United Nations Population Fund, has developed a training module on Domestic Violence for holding training courses for social workers. In December 2014 and September 2015, the National Institute of Labour and Social Research of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia organized a training course for more than 50 social workers of local offices of all social services in the city of Yerevan and Ararat Marz within the scope of the developed documents and the training module (process is continuous). It is aimed at effective organization of services provided to persons subjected to domestic violence, as well as clarification of functions of integrated social workers and acquisition of relevant skills.

39. Until 2016, need-driven services were being rendered to women, subjected to domestic violence, by non-governmental organizations (according to the 2010 data, seven non-governmental organizations: "Zangakatun", "Women's Support Centre", "Women's Rights Centre", "Public Information and Need of Knowledge", "Society

Without Violence" and "Sexual Assault Crisis Centre" were united and established "The Coalition to Stop Violence against Women"). NGOs closely co-operate with all the interested organizations and structures, particularly those of social protection, health care and police. Since 2016, within the scope of the State Budget programme "Social and psychological rehabilitation services for victims of trafficking" (co-financed by UMCOR NGO), services have also been provided to persons subjected to sexual violence.

40. In 2013, the programme "Improving the quality of service rendered to women victims of domestic violence" was implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia and the National Institute of Labour and Social Research. The programme was aimed at studying the quality and effectiveness of services rendered to women subjected to domestic violence, in order to make the required services more accessible.

41. The research on "Services rendered to women victims of domestic violence in the Republic of Armenia" presented an opportunity to clarify the types of services rendered to women victims of domestic violence, distribution of those services, quality and effectiveness of the services rendered, accessibility thereof. As well as activities, related to the elaboration of the above-mentioned legal acts of the social sector were carried out, based on the recommendations put forward for setting up an effective mechanism for social assistance and social protection of persons subjected to violence.

42. Taking into account the fact that, as a result of various discussions, including with NGOs, the necessity of having a separate Law "On domestic violence" has been regularly voiced, currently the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Armenia has set up a Working Group comprising representatives of interested executive bodies, which will provide an opportunity of studying the best international practices related to the sector in question, and elaborating on the basis thereof a new draft Law of the Republic of Armenia "On domestic violence"; it is expected to become a matter of extensive discussion on the part of interested non-governmental organizations, the civil society. The Government of the Republic of Armenia is expected to have completed the elaboration of the mentioned draft Law by the end of 2016.

43. Armenia attaches importance to signing of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, which also derives from the obligations assumed by the Republic of Armenia, for instance the Universal Periodic Review. The Republic of Armenia is expected to have signed the above-mentioned Convention by the end of 2017.

44. The activities carried out by the Police of the Republic of Armenia in this sector are briefly presented below:

45. Within the scope of the reforms implemented in the Police of the Republic of Armenia, the "Department for the Protection of Rights of Minors and Fight against Domestic Violence" was established within the General Department of Criminal Investigation of the Police of the Republic of Armenia, pursuant to the Order of the Head of the Police of the Republic of Armenia of 2013.

46. For the purpose of raising the awareness among citizens, referring them to relevant structures in cases of domestic violence, information corners — presenting literature on domestic violence, contacts of non-governmental organizations dealing

with family issues and rendering services in the Republic of Armenia, hotline numbers — have been established in certain divisions of the Police. The process of establishing information corners is a continuous process.

47. It should be noted that currently the subdivisions of the Police of the Republic of Armenia organize and carry out the activities aimed at the fight against domestic violence pursuant to the requirements of the Order approved by the Head of the Police of the Republic of Armenia in 2015 "On increasing the effectiveness of the immediate reaction to cases of domestic violence and the activities carried out with the victims of domestic violence", which provides that the victims of domestic violence are treated with specific attention and individual approach in police subdivisions. The activities with the victims of domestic violence are carried out in separate rooms by the police officer carrying out the proceedings for domestic violence, and the access to the given room by other police officers is limited. Besides, when necessary, police officers — for the purpose of providing psychological, social and other necessary assistance to victims of domestic violence — co-operate with local self-government bodies and non-governmental organizations.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

48. In order to bring Armenia's legislation in conformity with the requirements of Palermo Protocol and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, the Law on "Identification and Support to Persons Subjected to Trafficking in Human Beings and Exploitation" was adopted by the National Assembly of Armenia in December 17, 2014 and entered into force in June 30, 2015.

49. This law regulates procedures for identifying and supporting persons subjected to trafficking or exploitation, including foreigners and stateless persons, providing them with relevant residence status and safe return. The identification of victims and assistance provided to them is not conditioned by their cooperation with the law enforcement. The assistance includes also a lump-sum monetary compensation provided by State.

50. In order to ensure the implementation of the Law on "Identification and Support to Persons Subjected to Trafficking in Human Beings and Exploitation" following by-laws were adopted:

(a) Republic of Armenia Government Decree on Establishing the Procedure of Selecting Partner Non-Governmental Organizations and Selecting Representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations in the Commission Identifying Victims of Trafficking in Persons and Exploitation (Decree 851-N dated 30 July 2015);

(b) Decree of the Republic of Armenia Prime Minister on Approving the Core and Substitute Memberships of the Commission Identifying Victims of Trafficking in Persons and Exploitation (Decree 835-A dated 15 September 2015);

(c) Republic of Armenia Government Decree on Approving the Operating Procedure of the Commission Identifying Victims of Trafficking in Persons and Exploitation and Approving the Form of the Report Presented by the Commission Identifying Victims of Trafficking in Persons and Exploitation to the Council on Fighting Trafficking in Persons and Exploitation in the Republic of Armenia (Decree 1200-N dated 15 October 2015);

(d) Republic of Armenia Government Decree on Approving the Procedure of Granting the Protection Stipulated by the Republic of Armenia Law on Identification and Support of Persons Subjected to Trafficking in Persons and Exploitation to Potential Victims, Victims, and Special-Category Victims of Trafficking in Persons and Exploitation (Decree 1356-N dated 29 October 2015);

(e) Decree of the Republic of Armenia Prime Minister on Approving the Composition and Operating Procedure of the Council on Fighting Trafficking in Persons and Exploitation in the Republic of Armenia (Decree 760-A dated 18 August 2015);

(f) Republic of Armenia Government Decree on Establishing the Amounts and Provision Procedure of Support Stipulated by Law to Potential Victims, Victims, and Special-Category Victims of Trafficking in Persons and Exploitation (Decree 492-N dated 5 May, 2016);

(g) Republic of Armenia Government Decree on Establishing the Procedure of Organizing the Safe Return Stipulated by the Republic of Armenia Law on Identification and Support of Persons Subjected to Trafficking in Persons and Exploitation (Decree 353-N dated 6 April 2016).

51. The fifth National Action Plan on Fighting Exploitation and Trafficking of Human Beings in the Republic of Armenia for the period of 2016-2018 will be adopted by the Government of Armenia in the beginning June 2016.

52. The first independent evaluation of the NAP for 2010-2012 carried out with the support of the OSCE Office in Yerevan was launched in 2012. The results of above mentioned evaluation are taken into account while developing the next National Action Plan for 2013-2015. With an aim to evaluate the effectiveness of the envisaged activities, it is planned to conduct final monitoring of the implementation of fourth Action Plan in 2016.

Victims of trafficking in human beings

	2010			*2011*			*2012*			*2013*			*2014*		
General	19			13			14			19			13		
Form of exploitation	women	men	children	women	men	children	women	men	children	women	men	children	women	men	children
Prostitution or other sexual exploitation	16	–	3	7	–	4	6	–	1	8	–	4	11	–	–
Forced labour or services	–	–	–	–	–	2	–	–	1	–	–	7	–	1	1
Removal of organs	–	–	–	–	–	–	3	3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Other	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

Participation in political and public life

53. As previously noted, the new Electoral Code is currently being circulated in the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia and recommendations on ensuring the involvement of women with the ratio of 30/70 have been put forward for the purpose of including therein (for details see point 5 of the Answer).

54. On 16 July 2015, the Council of Court Chairpersons of the Republic of Armenia adopted Decision No 02-N, which approves the 2015-2017 Action Plan aimed at the implementation of Decision of the Council of Court Chairpersons of the Republic of Armenia "On promoting sex (gender) balance among candidates for judges" No 04-N of 29 August 2014, as a result of which tangible results targeted at increasing the level of involvement of women in the judicial system of the Republic of Armenia are already noticed.

55. Accordingly, as of May 2016, 170 out of 234 staff positions of judges are occupied by male representatives, 56 — by female representatives, whereas eight staff positions remain vacant. Thus, the number of female judges amounts to nearly 25 per cent of the total number of practicing judges.

56. The number of women in the Diplomatic Service of the Republic of Armenia is increased by way of enrolling more women in the Diplomatic School of Armenia (it should be noted that most of the graduates of the School take diplomatic service). With regard to female ambassadors, their number has reached to four as of 2016.

57. Regarding sex-disaggregated data of persons holding positions in community service in the Staffs of Municipalities of Yerevan and marzes as of 1 June 2014:

58. The total number of community servants is 6,176, of which 3,259 (52.8 per cent) are women and 2,917 (47.2 per cent) are men.

59. Pursuant to Article 27 of the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On Community Service", community servants holding positions of the same group and subgroup of community service of the corresponding staff shall have the right to equal pay rate. The pay rate of community servants exercising powers delegated by the State shall be determined within the framework of allocations designated from the State Budget for funding the powers delegated by the State.

60. With regard to members of the Council of the Elders, 10 out of 65 members of the Council Elders of Yerevan are women. Data on participation of women in political and public life provided by the National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia is presented below.

Education

61. Statistics on the number of children who left secondary schools without completing their education by grades and reasons for leaving is collected by academic years and published in the yearly book "Social situation in the Republic of Armenia". It should be noted that "marriage" or "pregnancy" (in case of girls) as well as drop outs due to cultural and religious background are not indicated as reasons for dropping out of school.

62. According to the yearly book "Social situation in the Republic of Armenia in 2014", during 2014-2015 academic year 244 children dropped out of school due to different reasons, out of which 33 were girls.

63. According to the Republic of Armenia Law on General Education, admission of pupils to the general educational institutions is carried out on the basis of the application of the parent or a legitimate representative of the child of school age and the agreement signed between the parent and institution. Up to achieving 16 by the child his/her parent carries responsibility for not providing the right of the child to basic education (or not enrolling to school) in a manner prescribed by the law. Pupils can continue their studies at the third level of general education, i.e. in high school, only in case of availability of the certificate of basic education.

64. However, "Order of accession, transfer of pupil to a general educational institution of the Republic of Armenia and his/her dismissal" also regulates entry to school of those children who did not attend school in a timely manner due to different reasons.

65. According to the mentioned Order, children aged higher than 16 who did not attend school may study the general education programme through self-education and get a certificate of basic education in an external order. According to the Republic of Armenia Law on Amendments to the Republic of Armenia Law on Education adopted on 8 April 2015 in the Republic of Armenia right to 12-year secondary education may be realized until achievement by the pupil of the age of 19 if it has not been realized earlier.

66. The mentioned provisions of the Order are also applicable to girls having left school because of marriage.

67. Today, there are 23 special secondary schools, where over 2,135 children with special educational needs enrol. The following State special secondary schools operate in Armenia:

(a) Special secondary school for children with hearing problems (one school);

(b) Special secondary school for children with vision problems (three schools);

(c) Special secondary school for children with severe speech disorder (two schools);

(d) Special secondary school for children with disorders of the musculoskeletal system (one school);

(e) Special (auxiliary) secondary school for children with intellectual disability (15 schools);

(f) Special secondary school for children with antisocial behaviour (one school).

68. Simultaneously, there are 182 secondary schools which provide inclusive education and where 4,706 children with special educational needs enrol. The list of such schools is expanding every year.

69. Thus, the State provides access to education for children with special educational needs. It is equally accessible to all learners/pupils, regardless of their gender.

70. It is also carried out training for teachers on inclusive education. The issues related to inclusive education have been included in training modules with the

duration of four hour-classes for teachers who are subject to certification in public schools of Armenia. In May-June 2015 approximately 2,394 teachers have been trained due to these modules. It should be noted that 1,295 teachers from 42 schools providing inclusive education also have been trained.

71. This process is supported by a number of international organizations and NGOs. Particularly within the frameworks of cooperation programmes with United Nations Children's and with "Bridge of Hope" NGO's support, in 2015, 1,213 teachers from 44 inclusive schools of Yerevan as well as 1,670 teachers from 102 schools of Syunik marz have been trained on the subject of inclusive education.

Instruction on topics of legal equality of women and men among learners

72. The component of legal equality of women and men is included in the programme and criteria for the subject "Social Studies" of the 8-12th grades of general education schools. The subject "Social Studies" helps learners of the 8-12th grades of general education schools become aware of legal equality of women and men.

73. Thematic materials on legal equality of women and men are included in the programme of the subject "Me and the Surrounding World" in elementary grades.

74. A two-year Master's programme on Women, Leadership and Development has been introduced in Yerevan State University. This Master's programme has commenced in September 2015.

Instruction on topics of healthy lifestyle among learners

75. The course on "Healthy Lifestyle" is taught at the 8-11th grades of general education schools, to which 14 class hours are annually allocated in each grade. The course has contributed to raising among learners awareness of healthy lifestyle and the basics of getting prepared for family life. The teachers of the course have undergone relevant trainings.

76. In the course of 2015, activities aimed at raising awareness of subjects regarding healthy lifestyle, relationships between sexes have been carried out in a number of primary vocational (handicraft) and secondary vocational educational institutions.

Employment

77. The Employment Strategy of the Republic of Armenia for 2013-2018 defines a requirement for increasing the minimum salary (bringing the mechanisms for determining the minimum salary in Armenia in line with international standards, taking also into account the macro-economic situation in the country, the level of labour productivity, as well as the stable trends of these indicators), which aims at improving the standard of living of the population through increasing income gained as a result of employment and introducing mechanisms of equitable distribution.

78. Increase in the minimum salary will reduce high dispersion of salaries existing in the economy, as well as the gender pay gap which is conditioned by both a high level of involvement of women in sectors with low productivity and the fact of holding by women lower positions.

79. In particular, the minimum salary was set at AMD 45,000 from 1 July 2013, AMD 50,000 from 1 July 2014 and AMD 55,000 from 1 July 2015. The Action Plan of the Government of the Republic of Armenia approved by Decision No 511-A 19 May 2014 provides for increase in the minimum monthly salary in the reporting period to reach AMD 65,000. The table below presents the relevant statistical data:

	2015	*Source*
Share of women in unemployment, percentage	50.6	Sample survey of workforce
Salary ratio of women and men, percentage	66.9	Sample survey of workforce

80. No any request has been submitted on the part of the Government of the Republic of Armenia to conduct research on sexual harassment at the workplace; in terms of this issue no scrutiny of legislation has been conducted as well.

Health

81. For the purpose of reducing the number of abortions, improving reproductive health, ensuring availability and accessibility of methods of contraception, a three-year programme on "Ensuring accessibility of modern methods of contraception for prevention of unintended pregnancy", implemented within the framework of cooperation between the Ministry of Health Care of the Republic of Armenia and the United Nations Population Fund, has been launched since 14 May 2014, and within the framework of this programme, assessment of 75 family planning offices operating in the cities and marzes of the Republic was carried out providing an opportunity to obtain comprehensive information on the capacity of workforce in the sector of family planning in Armenia, the needs of the offices, as well as on supply of modern contraceptives.

82. Guideline on "Medical Standards for the Use of Modern Methods of Contraception for Prevention of Unintended Pregnancy" and practices were approved by Order of the Minister of Health Care of the Republic of Armenia No 2202-A of 14 August 2015.

83. Training courses were organized for 503 obstetrician-gynaecologists and family physicians on the topic "Medical standards for the use of modern methods of contraception for prevention of unintended pregnancy" which will help them render quality medical services to the population.

84. Primary health-care institutions performing the function of reproductive health preservation were provided by the United Nations Population Fund with modern contraceptives (combined oral contraceptive pills, condoms, intrauterine devices) to be allocated to the population free of charge.

85. For the purpose of distributing and monitoring contraceptives, a Logistic Management Information System has been developed and introduced with the provision of necessary funding.

86. As of 2015, contraceptives were obtained within the framework of international co-operation, since 2015, modern contraceptives have been obtained and provided free of charge to socially disadvantaged persons and those included in separate (special) groups of persons defined by Decision of the Government of the

Republic of Armenia No 318-N 3 March 2004, and this will in its turn ensure the increase in accessibility of modern contraceptives.

87. At the same time, large-scale activities are being carried out among the population aimed at raising the awareness about reproduction and family planning issues, encouraging the use of modern methods of contraception through community meetings/trainings with the population, printing and spreading of teaching aids, preparation and broadcast of radio and television programmes, screening of educational films on the methods of family planning, staging of interactive theatrical performances encouraging the use of contraceptives, trainings designed for journalists, etc.

88. In the course of 2015-2016, nearly 2,800 women and men at the age of puberty participated in the community meetings/trainings, and 1,780 young people participated in theatrical performances dedicated to reproductive health.

89. There is no lack of facilities providing outpatient and inpatient treatment to mothers in marzes. There is a large network of health-care facilities in marzes of Armenia, and there are medical care centres even in the smallest rural settlements, namely 612 medical-obstetric stations, 200 health-care centres providing medical care, notably, maternal health services, 75 women's consultation clinics, 49 institutions providing inpatient obstetric services. However, one of the main problems of maternal and child health-care system is the difference between the quality of medical care and service in rural and urban settlements.

90. In recent years, under the Strategy for Proportional Development of marzes, an enormous amount of work has been carried out in terms of reconstructing, furnishing medical institutions, ensuring accessibility and availability of quality medical care for the population of rural areas — both for women and men, and notably for the preservation of maternal health.

91. Fifteen medical centres operating in marzes (Ijevan, Hrazdan, Aparan, Ararat, Armavir, Goris, Gavar, Abovyan, Alaverdi, Gyumri, Berd, Noyemberyan, Meghri, Kapan, and Chambarak) were renovated and furnished with up-to-date equipment and personnel.

92. Buildings of nearly 170 primary health-care institutions were completely reconstructed or constructed as well.

93. In the course of 2012-2014, review of levels of medical care provided by facilities having recorded the best results in marzes has been conducted in the context of proportional development of medical facilities providing obstetric services in marzes, and based on the results of the review, nearly 12 institutions operating in marzes and providing obstetric services were awarded the second level of medical care.

94. As of 1 January 2015, 261 obstetrician-gynaecologists, 58 neonatologists, 92 anaesthesiologist-intensivists work in marzes.

95. According to the study of staffing requirements submitted by medical institutions of marzes, there is no urgent demand for neonatologists in the Republic of Armenia.

96. In medical facilities of the Republic of Armenia, there are only nine vacancies for neonatologists which will be filled in two years by graduates of Residency.

97. There is a demand for anaesthesiologist-intensivists, and in order to meet this demand, five anaesthesiologist-intensivists as well as four neonatologists were employed in medical facilities of marzes to work in the field of obstetrics through the targeted programme for residents. The targeted programme for residents is of a continuous nature and is aimed at meeting the staffing requirements of medical institutions and providing them with anaesthesiologist-intensivists.

98. No special studies have been conducted in the Republic of Armenia, which may confirm the information of the Committee that there are "negative social attitudes and discriminatory practices against pregnant women living with HIV".

99. There is no need to adopt a specific legislation and strategies to protect HIV-positive women from discrimination and address discrimination and violence targeted at such women, since the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia prescribes that "All persons shall be equal before the law. Discrimination based on sex, race, skin colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion, ideology, political or other views, membership to a national minority, property status, birth, disability, age, or other personal or social circumstances shall be prohibited".

100. In the Republic of Armenia, rights of persons living with HIV are also protected by the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On prevention of disease caused by human immunodeficiency virus", pursuant to which " ... the fact that a person is HIV-infected may not serve as a basis for restriction of his or her rights and freedoms, except for cases provided for by law".

101. Pursuant to the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On human reproductive health and reproductive rights", motherhood and childhood shall be under the patronage and protection of the State and the society and shall be entitled to assistance. A woman shall have the right to safe maternity, i.e. to preservation of health during pregnancy, to receive aid through application of methods posing minimal risk to her health and the health of the foetus and the newborn during childbirth and the postnatal period. Pursuant to the same Law, a woman shall have the right to receive during pregnancy free medical care and service related to pregnancy and delivery within the framework of targeted health-care programmes guaranteed by the State.

102. Another Law of the Republic of Armenia "On ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men" prescribes the guarantees for ensuring equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men in political, social, economic, health care, cultural and other fields of public life, and regulates the relations arising therefrom.

103. Insufficient level of awareness on transmission routes of HIV among persons and misconceptions about HIV/AIDS in the society are the causes of discriminatory attitudes towards persons living with HIV. In order to overcome them it is important to raise the level of awareness of the wide public of issues of HIV infection. For that purpose, the importance of non-discriminatory and more tolerant attitudes towards persons living with HIV is specially emphasized within the framework of memorable AIDS days — AIDS Memorial Day and World AIDS Day, and during public events beyond these memorable days, which are widely covered by the mass media. News items related to this issue are regularly made available in a wide range of media — newspapers, electronic news websites, social networks, television

programmes are also organized to this end. Social advertising devoted to the campaign against non-discriminatory attitudes towards persons living with HIV have also been prepared and broadcast.

104. Complex measures for prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV are undertaken in the Republic of Armenia.

105. For HIV testing, blood sample shall be taken from a pregnant woman during her first visit to the antenatal clinic. HIV testing of pregnant women is accompanied by pre- and post-test counselling which is provided by health-care providers having undergone a relevant training.

106. In case HIV test result is positive, the pregnant woman — for confirmation of diagnosis — shall be referred to the Republican Centre for AIDS Prevention; in case HIV infection is confirmed, pregnant women are placed under follow-up care. Prevention of mother-to-child-transmission of HIV is carried out pursuant to the national guideline approved by the Order of the Minister of Health Care of the Republic of Armenia. HIV-positive pregnant women and children born to them undergo antiretroviral treatment; artificial powdered milk is given to children.

107. In Armenia, since 2007, no case of HIV infection has been recorded among children born to mothers living with HIV, who have received preventive treatment. Armenia has achieved the targets prescribed by the World Health Organization (WHO) for validation of the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV in the Republic of Armenia, on the basis of which the country has initiated a process of validation of the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

108. From 25 to 29 April 2016, the expert group of the WHO and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS carried out a mission for the evaluation of reliability of elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV in the Republic of Armenia and the submission of a proposal thereon, as a result of which it has confirmed the achievements of the country in this field. The report drawn up by the mission will be submitted to the Global Validation Committee for the purpose of final validation of the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV in the country.

Women with disabilities

109. The main principles and directions of the State policy on protection of rights of persons with disabilities and their social inclusion have been prescribed in the draft Law of the Republic of Armenia "On protection of rights of persons with disabilities and their social inclusion" mainly taking into account the requirements of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted on 13 December 2006 (The Republic of Armenia ratified the Convention in 2010).

110. The goal of the Law is to ensure favourable conditions for the exercise, on an equal basis with others, of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities, their equal participation in social life and their effective social inclusion, guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, as well as in accordance with generally recognized principles and norms of international law and international treaties of the Republic of Armenia.

111. The Draft prescribes the basic concepts used in the field of protection of rights of persons with disabilities and their social inclusion, the main goal, principles and directions of the State policy on protection of rights of persons with disabilities and

their social inclusion, legal and organizational grounds necessary for the protection of rights of persons with disabilities and their social inclusion. Other relations pertaining to the prevention of disability, conduct of medical and social examination (re-examination), rendering of decisions in the field of medical and social examination, determination of disability, rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, ensuring accessible conditions and equal opportunities for the protection of rights and social inclusion are regulated.

112. For the purpose of ensuring equal opportunities and conditions for persons with disabilities and their inclusion in the society, the Draft prescribes norms related to all fields of social life. Moreover, the following target directions for ensuring equal opportunities have been prescribed:

(a) Accessibility;

(b) Health care;

(c) Education and upbringing;

(d) Employment;

(e) Social security and other social interests;

(f) Freedom of personal and family life;

(g) Culture;

(h) Recreation arrangement and sports.

113. For each direction, provisions have been prescribed for achieving social inclusion. Norms for achieving social inclusion include both legal framework and practical measures, including development of requirements, standards and rules for ensuring access to the physical environment, development of requirements and criteria for universal design, development of requirements, standards and rules for ensuring access to information and communication with the engagement of the organizations dealing with issues of persons with disabilities.

114. In the Draft, special norms for women with disabilities are not prescribed, the requirement for ensuring equal and accessible conditions and ways for the achievement thereof apply to everyone. In the Draft, one of the norms stipulated in the principles of the State policy on the protection of rights of persons with disabilities and their social inclusion is the equality between women and men.

115. Women with disabilities are included in all State targeted programmes of the Republic of Armenia being implemented in the field of disability. These programmes are aimed at full inclusion of persons with disabilities taking into account their special needs regardless of sex.

116. The draft Law "On protection of rights of persons with disabilities and their social inclusion" was submitted to the Government.

Rural women
Statistical information

	2015	*Source*
Percentage, total number of women employed in the sector of agriculture	40.0	Sample survey of labour force

On activities carried out under "Community Agricultural Resource Management and Competitiveness" projects

117. Under the Community Agricultural Resource Management and Competitiveness project, 3,311 out of 11,678 members of pasture user association consumer cooperatives of 91 communities of six marzes of the Republic of Armenia — Aragatsotn, Gegharkunik, Lori, Syunik, Shirak and Tavush — are women, which means that women actively participate in decision-making processes in cooperatives. As a result of conducting trainings for chairpersons, members, accountants, dispute settlers of cooperatives and community governing bodies of target communities of six marzes under the project, 3,260 women out of the total of 12,380 participants of the trainings acquired necessary knowledge, they were almost lacking earlier, in critical fields such as effective pasture management and legal requirements concerning the sphere of pasture management, working plans for cooperatives and finance management, accounting, fundamental principles of cooperatives, conditions required for establishment, and persistent achievements, rights and duties of executive bodies and members of cooperatives, powers of the general meeting, appeal mechanisms, which enables them to perform their activities more effectively, e.g. keep accounting records of cooperatives, properly plan pasture use, observe the requirements of pasture use schemes, etc. Active participation of women in the decision-making processes in cooperatives is ensured by encouraging membership of women to cooperatives established under the programme, through community meetings and trainings as well as other measures implemented within the framework of the project. Effect of the implementation of all mentioned actions is also the change of the opinion of population of target communities on involvement of women in decision-making processes, which is of considerable importance to ensuring social guarantees.

118. Entrepreneurial activity of women is promoted through competitive grants components implemented under the Community Agricultural Resource Management and Competitiveness project. When selecting the components, the participation of competent applicants — legal persons, managed by women and/or with a larger number of female employees, was encouraged by providing them with individual counselling and, in case of equal conditions, giving preference to them. Sixteen out of 69 winning components are managed by women, and 53 out of nearly 259 jobs, created under the components, have been created for women. Under each component implemented with the participation of women, nearly 6-7 jobs on average have been created. The income of enterprises has increased by 25-55 per cent due to the implemented components.

119. Under the second Community Agricultural Resource Management and Competitiveness project, 1,773 out of 7,416 members of pasture user association consumer cooperatives of 57 communities of 8 marzes of the Republic of Armenia — Aragatsotn, Gegharkunik, Lori, Syunik, Shirak, Tavush, Kotayq and Vayots Dzor —

are women. For the purpose of ensuring acknowledgement of the role and importance of women in the decision-making processes in cooperatives, in the trainings for chairpersons, members, accountants, dispute settlers of cooperatives and community governing bodies of target communities under the project, in addition to topics such as legal requirements concerning the field of pasture management, working plans for cooperatives and finance management, etc., social topics like resettlement policy, grievance redress mechanisms and acknowledgement of social guarantees have been included as well. Knowledge, acquired as a result of trainings, will enable women not only to perform their activities more effectively, for example to keep accounting records of cooperatives, properly plan pasture use, etc., but also to engage more actively in the decision-making processes in cooperatives, acknowledging the importance of participating in decision making.

120. Entrepreneurial activity of women is increasing by ensuring the participation of women in Value Chain Development components, implemented under the second Community Agricultural Resource Management and Competitiveness project. When selecting the components, in case of equal conditions, the preference is given to enterprises, managed by women and/or with a larger number of female employees. Among enterprises implementing the 14 components having won in the first round, there are no enterprises managed by women, but 220 out of nearly 522 employees of all 14 enterprises are women, thus those women are indirect beneficiaries of the components, and the components will have positive impact on settlement of issues concerning employment and generation and/or increase of the income of women in the community.

Female refugees and asylum seekers

121. The Law of the Republic of Armenia of 27 November 2008 "On refugees and asylum" provides for specific guarantees for female asylum seekers taking into account their particular situation and vulnerability. Part 7 of Article 51 of the Law, in particular, provides that interviews with female asylum seekers may, should they so wish, be held by a female official of the authorized body where necessary with the help of a female translator.

122. When providing asylum seekers with temporary accommodation, the preference should be given to female asylum seekers and their children. In case of a free room they should be placed in the temporary accommodation centre operating under the State Migration Service of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Development of the Republic of Armenia ("Special Accommodation Centre" SNCO), where with the funds of the State Budget of the Republic of Armenia they should be provided with living conditions (food and hygiene items) and exempted from utility charges.

123. According to Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia No 1440-N of 19 November 2009 "On approving the procedure for placing asylum seekers in a temporary accommodation centre and providing them with living conditions", when placing asylum seekers in a temporary accommodation centre, consideration should be given to the sex of the asylum seeker along with various other circumstances. Individuals of the opposite sex not belonging to the same family may not be placed in the same room.

124. Guarantees for placing women in separate rooms are also provided for by the legal act regulating relations pertaining to the placement of asylum seekers having

illegally entered the territory of the Republic of Armenia in special facilities being set up within crossing points of the State border and transit zones of the Republic of Armenia. According to Decision of the Government of the Republic No 783-N of 18 July 2013 "On defining the procedure for operation of Special Facilities located within the Crossing Points and Transit Zones of the Republic of Armenia and accommodation of aliens in such facilities", each crossing point must be equipped with at least two rooms for individuals of the opposite sex. Personal search of aliens by a person of the opposite sex is prohibited.

125. Female refugees living in hostels should be exempted from accommodation charge. In case of acquiring citizenship of the Republic of Armenia, they should be given an opportunity to privatize hostel premises occupied thereby. Since 2001, nearly 750 refugee families have privatized hostel premises occupied thereby.

126. Pursuant to the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On making supplements and amendments to the Law of the Republic of Armenia 'On refugees and asylum'" adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia on 16 December 2015, women seeking asylum and recognized as refugees in the Republic of Armenia also have been given same rights, with regard to higher education, as a citizen of the Republic of Armenia. Women recognized as refugees in the Republic of Armenia have received same rights, with regard to recognition of foreign school certificates, diplomas and academic degrees, exemption from duties and fees, and granting of scholarships, as the citizens of the Republic of Armenia.

127. Female refugees seeking asylum, as well as having obtained asylum in the Republic of Armenia have the right to search jobs and work in the same conditions as the citizens of the Republic of Armenia, if their data meet the requirements prescribed by the legislation of the Republic of Armenia for performing the job concerned.

128. As vulnerable persons, asylum seekers in the Republic of Armenia are included in the list of the persons entitled to State-guaranteed free medical assistance and care.

129. In case of rejection of an asylum application, when appealing against the decision on rejection through the judicial procedure, pursuant to the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On State duty" they are exempted from the State duty provided for by the legislation of the Republic of Armenia for examination of their statement of claim in all judicial instances (in the Administrative Court of the Republic of Armenia — AMD 4,000, in the Administrative Court of Appeal of the Republic of Armenia — AMD 10,000, in the Court of Cassation of the Republic of Armenia — AMD 20,000).

130. Many asylum seekers, including female asylum-seekers, whose applications for asylum in the Republic of Armenia have been rejected, apply to the court exercising their right to appeal against decisions on rejection adopted by an administrative body. All female asylum seekers rejected in the Republic of Armenia enjoy equal rights with male asylum seekers and protect their interests in courts as prescribed by law.